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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 002948

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NL](#) [KPRP](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/EXTREMISM: ONE YEAR AFTER VAN GOGH,  
NO UNIFIED APPROACH

REF: ...

REF: A. THE HAGUE 2898

[1](#)B. THE HAGUE 2705 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Nearly one year after the murder of controversial Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by Islamic extremist Mohammed Bouyeri, the GONL is still struggling to craft a strategy to address rising radicalization of its large and disenfranchised Muslim population. An October 26 conference in Amsterdam, organized by the National Counter Terrorism Office (NCTB) to survey efforts to combat terrorism and radicalization since Van Gogh's November 2, 2004 murder, made clear the GONL remains divided on how to tackle social, political, and law enforcement issues related to radicalization. The conference highlighted the difficulty of discussing the link between terrorism and Islamic extremism in a country simultaneously struggling to address broader issues of Muslim integration. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) During a well-attended day-long Amsterdam conference on radicalization hosted by the National Counter Terrorism Office (NCTB), the Dutch Ministers of Justice, Interior, and Immigration and Integration presented strikingly divergent views on how to address the problem of radicalization among Dutch Muslims. Justice Minister Donner, for example, stressed the need for mutual understanding of beliefs to combat radicalization, a problem he described as emerging from our own ground and soil. Referring to the broader societal divides between Muslim and non-Muslim populations, he argued that all sides should learn to accept changes and differences, even fundamental ones, to reduce social tensions. Interior Minister Remkes, on the other hand, argued that government representatives must stand firm against fundamentalism, radicalization and violence. Articulating a hard-line approach, Remkes called for a clear delineation of non-debatable values, and urged local community actors, including schools, to work with the Dutch intelligence services to identify radicals. (NOTE: Earlier in the week, Dutch press reported widespread criticism of Remkes' proposal. END NOTE.) Minister of Immigration and Integration Verdonk, known for supporting tough immigration and integration policies, cited a serious lack of involvement and commitment to integration by certain groups as a contributing factor to radicalization, and called for wider participation of the Muslim community in the broader society.

[1](#)3. (U) Non-governmental panelists, drawn from academia and the Muslim community, similarly took different approaches to both root causes of, and potential solutions for radicalization. Professor Bassam Tibi of Cornell University cited the lack of a European Muslim identity as a fundamental problem leading to radicalization, and called for the creation of a European Islam compatible with core European values and principles. A Dutch researcher on Muslim youth and radicalization, Frank Buijs, similarly called for religious alternatives within Islam, noting that Muslim youth are finding few moderate Islamic voices when trawling the internet for answers to their existential and basic life questions.

[1](#)4. (U) Sadik Harchaoui, Director of a Dutch social organization catering to youth, painted a bleak portrait of a large Muslim population plagued by serious and concrete social and economic ills, including discrimination, poverty, and unemployment. He charged the GONL with failure to address problems within the Muslim community prior to Van Gogh's murder, and for now overemphasizing the potential for radicalization of the community. Harchaoui claimed the government was creating a virtual reality of radicalization, one that made radicalization synonymous with terrorism and therefore threatened to alienate the broader Muslim community.

[1](#)5. (SBU) COMMENT: The Amsterdam conference, intended to highlight the GONL's progress in combating Islamic radicalization in the year since Theo van Gogh's murder, instead exposed stark divisions within the government, and

within Dutch society at large, on how to tackle this increasingly important issue. The conference also highlighted intense Dutch interest in learning from U.S. experiences with regard to integrating immigrant populations while maintaining a clear national identity. Emboffs in attendance fielded a large number of questions about U.S. policies and programs throughout the day, demonstrating both curiosity about the U.S. experience and a sometimes surprising lack of familiarity with U.S. history and society. Post will continue to look for opportunities -- such as a possible U.S. trip by Minister Verdonk (ref a) -- to reach out to Muslim and non-Muslim Dutch leaders seeking to counter radicalization and extremism in the Netherlands. END COMMENT.  
SCHOFER